

precipice, and there he found the three bodies shattered almost beyond recognition. He added that the Lammergeyers had already got at them.

W. OSBORN, LIEUT.-GENERAL, I.A.

NAGGUR, KULU PUNJAB, 12th January 1908.

No. XVI.—REMARKS UPON THE SNAKE *CONTIA ANGSTICEPS*.

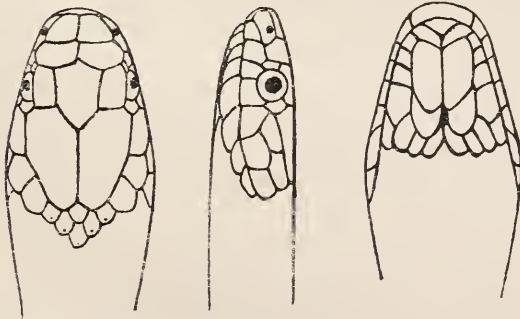
I am much indebted to Mr. R. A. Spence who has submitted for my examination two specimens of the little snake *Contia angusticeps* sent to the Society's collection by Sir H. McMahon, with the request that I would write a description of this little known snake. Reference to Mr. Boulenger's Catalogue (Vol. II, 1894, p. 262) shows that at the time he wrote a single specimen only was known which was in the Indian Museum. This was sent to him for inspection by Mr. Selater. His earlier work Fauna. Brit. Ind.—Reptilia and Batrachia (1890) made no reference to this snake. The specimens sent to Mr. Boulenger was procured from Cherat, Baluchistan.

Since this from 1899 to 1900 Sir H. McMahon acquired eleven specimens in the Malakand, and he says in a letter addressed to this Society: "This little snake is fairly common in one restricted locality, *i. e.*, the hill slope a few yards below and N.-W. of the Political Agent's house."

A brief allusion to these specimens was contributed to this Society by Sir H. McMahon himself which appeared in our Journal Vol. XIV, page 181.

Some of these specimens were given to the British Museum. The only examples I saw there in 1903 were 3 in number and all presented by Sir H. McMahon. In 1904 Dr. N. Anundale made a brief allusion to 5 specimens in the Indian Museum received from Sir H. McMahon, and he figured one (Plate XI, fig. 1) in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1904. He mentions here that the type specimen has been lost.

The only other specimens I know of are the two now submitted to me.



*Contia angusticeps*  
from a specimen 114  
(× 4 times)

For those who have not access to Mr. Boulenger's Catalogue I venture to describe the snake again.

*Rostral*: Touches 6 shields, the sutures it makes with the anterior nasals rather greater than with the internasals, nearly twice as long as those made with first labials. *Internasals*: A pair; the suture between them rather longer,

than that between the præfrontal fellows; about three-fourths the internaso-præfrontal suture. *Præfrontals*: A pair; the suture between them about two-thirds the præfronto-frontal suture; touching the internasal, nasal, loreal (when present; if absent the 2nd supralabial), præocular, supraocular, and frontal. *Frontal*: Touches 6 shields; the sutures it makes with the supraoculars one quarter greater than with the parietals, one-third to one-quarter greater than with the præfrontals. *Supraoculars*: Length about three-quarters the length of frontal; breadth about half the breadth of the frontal. *Nasals*: Entire, with the nostril situated rather above, and behind the mid-point of the shield; touching the 1st and 2nd supralabials. *Loreal* if present very small, frequently absent being united with the præfrontal. *Præoculars*: One; not reaching the crown. Eye with vertically elliptical pupil. *Postoculars*: One. *Temporals*: One, touching the 5th and 6th supralabials. *Supralabials*: 7; the 3rd and 4th touching the eye; 5th, 6th and 7th largest, subequal. *Infralabials*: 5; the 5th or 4th and 5th touching the posterior sublinguals; the 5th largest, broader than the posterior sublinguals, and touching two scales behind. *Anterior sublinguals* larger than posterior. The 1st infralabial suture one-fifth to one-sixth the suture between the anterior sublinguals. *Costals*: 2 heads lengths behind head 15, midbody 15, 2 heads lengths before vent 13. In the step from 15 to 13 the 3rd and 4th rows above the ventrals blend.\* The last row, and the vertebral row are not enlarged. Apical pits are present, and single. Keels absent. *Ventrals* evenly rounded, broad, the last costal row only being visible in part on either side. *Anal* divided. *Subcaudals*, divided. Head depressed, body elongate, cylindrical, tail moderate. *Colour* pale dun brown, nearly uniform dorsally, but if inspected closely the edges of the scales are seen to be lighter. The head has two dark cross bars, one between the eyes, one in the middle of the parietals, and a broader bar nuchally, behind which some specimens have a row or two of transverse spots. Sir H. McMahon says that in life these marks are black, but soon fade in spirit. The belly is dirty whitish, and unspotted.

*Remarks*.—It is to be noted that Mr. Boulenger mentions the presence of a small loreal, but in one of the three specimens I examined in the British Museum this shield is absent, and it is absent in both the specimens just received. The ventrals and subcaudals in the five specimens examined by me are as follows:—

196 + 77, 185 + 81, 196 + 66, 201 ? + 72, 182 + 81.

This snake is interesting from the point of view of distribution. According to Mr. Boulenger's Catalogue there are 21 known species of *Contia*. Twelve of these are only known from North America, 1 from South America and 8 from Asia; 7 of these are however only known from Persia and further West. The

\* In one specimen before me the costals are aberrant. The 3rd row above the ventrals subdivides, the resulting two rows again coalescing and dividing again. The rows are thus irregular in the second fourth of the body numbering 17 and 16 in places.

remaining one, *viz.*, *angusticeps* is known from Baluchistan, and the N.-W. Frontier of India (Malakand). It is one of the smallest snakes that occurs within our Indian limits. The longest record is 15 inches, and though there are a few snakes shorter in adult life I am not aware of any that are more slender excepting perhaps *Typhlops braminus* and *Callophis trimaculatus*.

Sir H. McMahon says "In life this little snake is most active and lively, and assumes a most pugnacious attitude when teased."

F. WALL, MAJOR, I.M.S., C.M.Z.S.

DIBRUGARH, ASSAM, 28th July 1907.

No. XVII.—NOTES ON THE INCUBATION AND BROOD OF THE  
INDO-BURMESE SNAKE-LIZARD OR SLOW WORM  
(*OPHISAURUS GRACILIS*).

On the 10th of September a cooly in Shillong brought me a female slow worm (*Ophisaurus gracilis*) with 5 eggs with which she was reported to have been found, but knowing that the European Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) is viviparous in habit I was inclined to be sceptical.

The eggs, much sullied by the soil beneath which they were deposited, are probably originally white. They are soft shelled, and the investment much like white kid. The poles are isomorphous, and the dimensions of one egg typical of the rest are  $\frac{1}{2}\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch.

One egg was opened, and a living embryo extracted which measured  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches, the tail accounting for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches. On the 19th of September one egg hatched, the youngster measuring  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches, the tail  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches. On the 18th another of exactly similar proportions emerged, and the last which hatched appeared on the 20th and was  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches long. The hatchlings are lively little creatures betraying some timidity but making no attempt at self-defence. In colour they are very different from adults. The prevailing hue is a pinkish-buff or dove colour with a metallic sheen. A conspicuous black band originating in the lore and passing through the temporal region is continued along the side of the body to the tail tip. The nostril is black. A fine black line originating beneath the eye passes along the lower lip and extends as far back as the vent. Behind a median nuchal black spot three series of smaller black spots progressively diminishing in size pass down the dorsum, the median row being continued well on to the tail. The beautiful metallic blue dorsal marks seen in adults are conspicuously absent.

Investigation proved that these little creatures are endowed with the same means of escape from the egg as young snakes. As I had young snakes of *Tropidonotus piscator* hatching contemporaneously I was able to compare the two,